

## URBAN PROJECTS IN SCYTHIA MINOR

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### Abstract

*This study presents some examples of cities – Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Tropaum Traiani, Troesmis, Noviodunum, Arganum, Dinogetia, Capidava – that focus on the urban projects that the Romans put into practice in the province of Scythia Minor, where they developed Greek urban types in order to put into practice the new conceptions according to which the architectural model of Urbs should be a living example.*

**Keywords:** *urban type, architectural model, city.*

### Rezumat

*Studiul prezintă câteva exemple de orașe – Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Tropaeum Traiani, Troesmis, Noviodunum, Arganum, Dinogetia, Capidava –, care aduc, în prim-plan, proiecte urbanistice pe care romanii le-au pus în practică în provincia Scythia Minor, unde au dezvoltat tipuri urbanistice grecești, găsite aici pentru a pune în practică noile concepții, conform cărora modelul arhitectural al lui Urbs trebuia să fie un exemplu viu.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *tip de urbanizare, model arhitectural, oraș.*

Immediately after the Roman conquest, urbanism and architecture as well reached their peak of development in ancient times and even in the first part of Late Antiquity. The role of the peripheral regions had started to grow in the Empire, beginning with the period of the Antonions, while the Late Empire, opened by the dynasty of the Severs, affirms its force in architecture, urbanism extending itself in provinces, too. Our newly founded cities will respect the same construction techniques of buildings, the most frequent being *opus incertum*, *opus caementicum*, *opus quadratum*, *opus listatum*. Generally speaking, a more robust treatment is noticed, without polishing and excessive finishing, the same architectural forms, with an obvious concert for geometrization and the same rules of organisation and disposing these constructions in the area of the city, even some villages (*pagi*) had a high level of systematization, sometimes similar to that of the cities. This phenomenon is not recorded only in Dacia Traiana. Scythia Minor has also recorded an urban and architectural boom in the II<sup>nd</sup> and III<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. Compared to the Greek period, Histria increases, old buildings (the theater) are restored and new ones are built (the Roman baths). The city of Tomis has a new basilica, with *Mosaic Buildings* and the Roman baths in the neighbourhood). Propagandistically speaking, the bright and unitary Roman architecture, an artistic field of major importance for the Romans, will enjoy the same consideration on the territory of our country, too. The implementation of elements from the Roman civilization and, implicitly, of architectural and urban rules became more intense, thus being considered a

*sine que non* condition for the proper administration of the new Dacian provinces.

In the same period, contemporary with the Dacian one, in the *polis* of Scythia Minor, Histria, Tomis, Callatis, there were Greek urban types: the quadrilateral plan of the settlement, a stone wall for protection – fragments from the archaic inside wall of Histria have resisted up today and also from the Hellenistic wall of Callatis – an orthogonal street network, with an organized texture of the streets, symmetry axis, monumental public buildings – having a provincial aspect in terms of modest size and doubtful quality – grouped around the agora: we still have relics of the archaic temple of Zeus in Histria, but especially Hellenistic remains of the temples (from Histria as well, but also from some buildings in Tomis and Callatis). After the conquest, the old fortresses found by the Romans will be further developed by them, new cities were also founded. In Scythia Minor – where cities were considered foreign<sup>1</sup> – no city was made a colony. But Rome's urban planning was also applied to this province, propaganda acted for the implementation of new concepts according to which the architectural model of *Urbs* had to be a living example of imperial force in this region, too.

Being developed from an urban point of view since archaic times, *Histria*<sup>2</sup> (the rural area of Istria, the county of Constanța) received, after the Hellenistic wall with towers and gates, a second wall – an early Roman one (at the beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> century AD), with bastions, towers and ditches<sup>3</sup>, when the plan of the town became strictly geometrical, trapezoidal; the wall was rebuilt at the end of the III<sup>rd</sup> century AD and was enlarged (the IV<sup>th</sup> century – the VI<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>4</sup>. Being strengthened in the western part (that is kept up to a height of 4m) – the area which is mostly exposed to attacks – a high stone wall outside and a smaller one inside, with emplecton in the middle, being built out of shale and limestone rocks connected by mortar. Except for the two external towers and two internal ones of the main gate, of

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<sup>1</sup>Tomis, *civitas libera*, Callatis, *civitas foederata*, Histria, *civitas stipendiaria*. Cf. Bărbulescu, 2007, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>It is the oldest city in Romania, founded also by the Ionian colonists from Miletus in the second half. of the VII<sup>th</sup> century BC. It reached a high stage of development in the VII<sup>th</sup> - VI<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, the city-fortress is conquered and integrated to the Dacian state in 55 BC by Burebista in his campaign on the Black Sea and experienced a period of flourishing during the Roman domination. Invasions decreased, as it originally dealt with a surface of 60 ha decreased to 30 ha in the II<sup>nd</sup> century AD. It is estimated that it had a population of 10-15 000 inhabitants. Cf. Condurachi, 1978, s.v. Histria; Constantinescu, 1989, p. 266, s.v. ISTROS, HISTRIA (Acropola Cetății ~); Mihai Bărbulescu *et alii*, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Ionescu *et alii*, 2005, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Condurachi, 1968, p. 16.

3.3m wide<sup>5</sup>, there were also three defence towers on the west side, with arches at the entrance and five strong bastions at the corners and at the gates (there were another two doors, of 2.40m high, respectively, of 1.1m high)<sup>6</sup>, and intermediate ones. In the Late Period, the city was defended by three waves of land with water ditches<sup>7</sup>. There were urban preoccupations, the buildings were organised in *insulae* and separated by a parallel streets that still respected the conditions of the land; a large trapezoid market (25x14.5m)<sup>8</sup> was paved with slabs of shale and limestone, from which started a road paved with limestone thrust, another one parallel with the enclosure wall, made of sand<sup>9</sup>. The streets were paved and channelled ever since Constantine's reign<sup>10</sup>. In late ancient times, *Tomis*<sup>11</sup> (Constanța) had a trapezoidal enclosure wall (III<sup>rd</sup> century AD), 3m thick<sup>12</sup>, with circular and quadrilateral towers of the Pontic type. Two gates were kept bounded by two defensive towers, and a corner tower<sup>13</sup>. The city had sewerage, aqueducts, roads of 6-7m wide, with pavement and sidewalks (a street sidewalk during Late Antiquity was of 1.2m wide and 0.3m height<sup>14</sup>). One can only assume that there existed waves of land and ditches too, but this was not archaeologically proved<sup>15</sup>. Between the II<sup>nd</sup> – the III<sup>rd</sup> century AD, Callatis (Mangalia, the county of Constanța)<sup>16</sup> had a defence wall around 3 m

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<sup>5</sup>Suceveanu *et alii*, 2005, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup>Bucovală, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Suceveanu *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup>DEAVR, 1980, p. 186.

<sup>10</sup>Condurachi, 1968, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>It was founded in the VII<sup>th</sup> and the VI<sup>th</sup> centuries BC by the Greek settlers from Miletus, in 72-71 – 61 BC, it became *civitas foederata*, afterwards it was conquered and remained under the rule of Burebista until his death. After the year 28 BC, it was under the Roman protectorate and in the year 46 AD, it was integrated, with the whole area, to Moesia. Tomis, becoming more developed, became the capital of the territory between the Danube and the Sea (which formed the province of Scythia Minor in 297 AD) and even received the name of *Metropolis of the Left Pontus*. It had, during the flourishing period of the Principate, 25-30 000 inhabitants. Cf. Păcurariu, 2004, p. 127; Condurachi, 1978, p. 39; Bărbulescu *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 63; *Istoria...*, 2010, p. 318.

<sup>12</sup>Canarache, 1961, p. 19. According to some researches, this happened during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, after 170 AD when the costobocs attacked, then it was restored. Cf. Ionescu *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup>DEAVR, p. 111, s.v. Constanța.

<sup>14</sup>Canarache, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup>Ionescu *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 82-83.

<sup>16</sup>Founded in the late VI<sup>th</sup> century BC by the Dorian colonists from Pontic Heraclea, the city has developed strongly and continuously after the treaty of alliance with Rome, *foedus*, from 72-71 BC. During the Principality, its population

wide and 8-9m high, with defence towers designed having 7m outside, with one gate on the western side, two towers (on this side, there was a defensive moat with a wave of land of 5-6m depth) and a smaller gate on the southern side<sup>17</sup>.

Except for the three major cities from Scythia Minor, the urbanism of three municipalities can be recognised (Tropaeum Traiani, Troesmis, Noviodunum) – which were created by the Romans in II<sup>nd</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. The fortress of *Tropaeum Traiani*<sup>19</sup> was called after the triumphal *Monument* built here by the Emperor Traianus (Adamclisi rural area, county of Constanța). We partially know the rectangular<sup>20</sup> plan of the city (the largest Roman civil settlement in Dobrogea) because the following were released: a part of the enclosure wall, 3m thick, plated with large blocks of stone and mortar<sup>21</sup>, with defence towers having several levels (parallelepiped on sides and having the form of a horseshoe at its corners – being outside the line of the wall), the eastern, western and southern gates were also flanked by towers, the *decumanus* street (of 300m length and 14m width, which was unusually big in the Empire), probably having porticoes in the V<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>22</sup>, paved with stone slabs and a drain channel in the middle, also for the water supply pipe, and a part of *cardo*, 12m wide (both streets for pedestrians had porticoes, following the Italian model, in fact Greek-oriental, Tropaeum Traiani best suggesting – out of Scythia Minor's cities – a Constantinopolitan street<sup>23</sup>). The fortress's gates were opened, too (3 large gates) and the towers<sup>24</sup> (22)<sup>25</sup>. In many archaeological campaigns, new foundations are permanently discovered and walls of buildings are uncovered, such as the one of the Late Period (foundations), of large size (approximately 10.20x12.30 square metres), with the long side facing East-West and with an access road of 1.80 m, on the northern side, making the street network

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was about 10-15 000 inhabitants, comparable to Histria's population. Cf. Preda, 1963, p. 7; Condurachi, ed. cit., s.v. Mangalia, *History of Romanians*, vol. II, ed. cit., p. 317; Barbulescu *et alii*, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>17</sup>Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 25-26.

<sup>18</sup>Bărbulescu *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup>It was a fortress founded by Traianus upon a Dacian settlement, a *vicus* converted into a *municipium* before the year 170 AD; it belonged to the so-called *Limes Scythicus* and it had 100 000 square metres. Cf. Condurachi, p. 38, Barnea *et alii*, 1982, p. 98-99.

<sup>20</sup>Curinschi Vorona, 1981, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>Barbu, 1965, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup>*ibidem*, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup>Nicolescu, 1971, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup>Barnea *et alii*, p. 98-101.

<sup>25</sup>Florescu, 1980, p. 172.

complete. *Troesmis*<sup>26</sup> (Iglița, the county of Tulcea) – considered the capital of Roman Lower Moesia (just like the Greek one was Tomis<sup>27</sup>) and *Noviodunum*<sup>28</sup> (Isaccea city, the county of Tulcea) are the other two municipalities in Scythia Minor. At Noviodunum, the campaigns that still continue follow the release of the eastern, western and southern side of The Great Tower which has several phases of building<sup>29</sup>. In Scythia Minor also, it was known the urbanism of a few fortresses, such as the one from *Argamum*<sup>30</sup> (Doljman Cape, the rural area of Jurilovca, the county of Tulcea) (formerly Orgame), whose plan was irregular trapezoidal in Roman times<sup>31</sup>, its settlement being surrounded by a defense wall 2.8 to 4.2m thick<sup>32</sup>, with eight rectangular towers and 6 bastions, having an interior fortified with two waves of defence (and ditch) on the western side<sup>33</sup>, the most exposed, and on the south (wave and ditch) (the defense wall of the Greek city that was built in the V<sup>th</sup> century BC)<sup>34</sup>. For the Roman wall, mortar (for the parament) and emplecton were used. An irregular rectangular plan was the one of *Dinogetia* too (Garvăn, the county of Tulcea), the fortress built by Diocletianus – being the most advanced defence and surveillance post in the northern province of Scythia Minor. The 3m thick<sup>35</sup> wall (stone alternating with brick linked with mortar) surrounded an irregular surface over 1ha, 14 defence towers in the

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<sup>26</sup>It probably had a population of about 10 000 inhabitants. (After the transfer of the V<sup>th</sup> Macedonian Legion in Dacia) and it was composed out of the old pre-Roman settlement from west and of the *canabae* Roman camp from east; the important urban center had a prominent role in defending the province, being the headquarters for Herculius's Second Legion. Cf. Barbulescu et alii, p. 63; Condurachi, p. 38; s.v. Turcoaia.

<sup>27</sup>*Istoria românilor*, vol.II, ed. cit., p. 327.

<sup>28</sup>It was an important military and commercial center, located at the junction of the Danube and the great road that passed through Libida, Ulmetum and Tropaeum Traiani, headquarters of the I<sup>st</sup> Legion Iovia. Cf. Condurachi, *Dobrogea*, ed. cit., s.v. Isaccea.

<sup>29</sup>Victor Henrich Baumann - responsible, Aurel Stănică (ICEM Tulcea), Gheorghe Mănușu-Adameșteanu (MM București), Adrian Popescu (IAB), Chris Lockyear (London University), Dan Aparaschivei (UAIC Iasi), Ciprian Rădulescu (student, UO Constanta), in *Report of Archeological Research*, <http://www.cimec.ro/scripts/arh/cronica/detalii.asp?k=1395>

<sup>30</sup>Is the fourth Greek fortress, the oldest city (*polis*) in our country is to be referred to an ancient source, strategic point of monitoring the shift from the Sea to the Halmyris gulf, fort and walled town in Roman times. Cf. Mănușu-Adameșteanu, 2001, p. 11; Condurachi, *Dobrogea*, ed. cit., s.v. Argamum.

<sup>31</sup>Condurachi, *Dobrogea*, ed. cit., s.v. Argamum.

<sup>32</sup>Nicorescu in *Buletin...*, *apud* Ionescu et alii, p. 48.

<sup>33</sup>Ionescu et alii, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup>Mănușu-Adameșteanu, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup>Barnea, 1961, p. 17.

shape of a horseshoe<sup>36</sup>, a gateway on south-east<sup>37</sup>, two smaller gates in the western and northern parts. A network of streets provided then a rational division of the interior. *Via principalis* was about 4m wide (compared to 1.5-2m – secondary streets) and started from the big gate, stopping in the middle of the city at a crossroad that had other roads towards the north<sup>38</sup>. *Capidava* (the rural area of Topalu, the county of Constanța) did not become a *municipium*, but it was an important strategic point in the defence system of Scythia. Build at the beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> century AD and restored in the second half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century AD, after the Gothic attacks, the fortress is very well preserved (among the ones from Dobrogea). After its reconstruction during the middle of the IV<sup>th</sup> century AD, the fortress had a rectangular shape and dimensions of 105x127m, with walls over 2m thick and of 5-6m high. It had 7 towers of over 10m high, of different forms (rectangular, "fan" and horseshoe), a main gate of 2.5m wide on the south-eastern side and one on the northern side of the tower<sup>39</sup>. The territorial district which *Capidava* belonged to had a wide spread, including several settlements – among which there were *vici*, *pagi*, *villae rusticae* – with an advanced administrative organization, which depended on the fortress's commander, the organization resembled that of cities and districts<sup>40</sup>. The last building phase dates from Anastasiu's time (491-518 AD) and the middle of the VI<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup>Barnea et alii, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup>Condurachi, *Dobrogea*, ed. cit., s.v. Garvăn.

<sup>38</sup>Florescu, ed. cit., p. 169.

<sup>39</sup>Opriș, 2003, p. 18-19; [www.capidava.ro](http://www.capidava.ro).

<sup>40</sup>Florescu, 1965, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup>For more details, see Opriș, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

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